**23rd February 2020 Transfiguration Sunday**

**A short but structured service**

*(other suggestions and alternatives are below)*

**Gathering**

**Call to worship**

Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes

were like white light.

***And a voice from the cloud said: This is my much-loved Son, with whom I am very pleased, listen to him.***

God from God, Light from Light, the dazzling radiance of God’s glory:

Jesus of Nazareth, Friend of sinners.

***Glory and honour, thanksgiving and praise, be given to our God forever and ever!***

**Prayer of Approach**

Your glory, most holy Friend, we glimpse your glory in the night skies, and sense your handiwork across coast and inland. Yet much, much more we see your glory in Christ Jesus, transfigured by your light, and awesomely glorious in his final suffering, death and resurrection.

Please rescue our worship from self-serving sentimentality. Confront us with the Christ who brings disciples trembling to their knees; the One who awakens unanswerable questions and uninhibited adoration. For yours is the true light and the power and the glory, for ever.

***Amen!***

**Hymn**

**Prayer of confession**

My friends, let each of us now seek the grace of our Saviour Christ. Let us pray.

Holy Light, something embedded in the soul whispers: “All is made for light”. But our proud ignorance shouts louder, and lead us back into the dark lies and prejudices of an evil world. Lord have mercy.

 ***Lord have mercy.***

Holy Peace, something deep in us says: “All is made for harmony”, But the discord within me joins with the discord of the world around me, and I slip back into distrust and aggression. Christ have mercy.

 ***Christ have mercy.***

Holy Love, something in our human spirit sings: “All is made for justice and compassion”. But fear and greed quell the song, and we acquiesce in neglect and injustice. Lord have mercy.

 ***Lord have mercy.***

Liberating and healing God, by the grace of Jesus Christ, may we be forgiven, and delivered from all the powers of darkness. In the light of Christ may we walk without wavering or stumbling. For your name’s sake.

 ***Amen!***

**Word of assurance**

Sisters and brothers in the faith, Christ Jesus came with peace to those who were near and peace to those who were far away. In him our sins are forgiven and our final victory assured.

 ***Thanks be to God.***

 *(often the Psalm may be used for the prayer and/or the word of grace)*

**Service of the Word**

**Psalm for the day –Psalm 99 (Note Psalm 2 is an alternative)** *More Australian Psalms, © B.D. Prewer & Open Book Publishers*

The glorious love of God rules;

 ***let mere nations tremble!***

God wears the light of galaxies;

 ***let our little planet shake!***

Greater than the holiest temples,

 ***shaper of time and space.***

Let humanity tremble in awe

 ***and worship such Otherness!***

Exquisite Lover of justice,

 ***you uphold sincere goodness.***

Wherever there is impartial love,

 ***it is your activity.***

Let everyone sing your praises

 ***and fall at your holy feet.***

Among today’s pastors and priests

 ***you still have a Moses and Aaron.***

Where there are seers and prophets,

 ***there is found a Samuel.***

Pillars of fire still speak,

 ***and the law of love still stands.***

O unspeakable Name,

 ***even now you hear your people.***

You are a forgiving God,

 ***but your take evil to task***

We celebrate such awesome love,

 ***we exult in the holiness of our God!.***

**Epistle or Old Testament/alternate reading: Exodus 24: 12-18 or 2 Peter 1:16-21**

**Gospel reading: Matthew 17:1 – 9**

**Short reflection and discussion** *(see links below)*

(Hymn)

**Prayers for others**

**Sharing of concerns**

**Sharing of notices**

**Prayers**

Stir up in us, Loving God, the desire and the determination to glorify you in every prayer and in all our relationships. Transfigure not only our own lives but also the lives and affairs of the millions with whom we share this planet.

Transfigure each ordinary church-goer.

***Dispel discouragement and self-doubt, self-righteousness and arrogance.***

Transfigure the women and men who preach the Gospel.

***Enlarge their understanding and expand their capacity to love.***

Transfigure the hopes of the down-trodden and dispossessed.

***Give a new compassion to the strong and the prosperous.***

Transfigure the expectations of the young.

***Disperse the vainglory and indulgence with which this society indoctrinates them.***

Transfigure the values and goals of political leaders.

***Inspire them to act justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with you.***

Transfigure the anguish of those who tremble or weep, suffer or die today.

***Let the valley of sorrows become an avenue of hope to your children.***

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Amen!***

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Sending forth the people of God**

**Offering** (a sharing of our gifts and the call to bless others as we have been blessed)

**Hymn**

**Blessing and commissioning**

God, the most beautiful and most holy One, radiant beyond our imagining, says to us. “This is my precious Son, with whom I am delighted, listen to him.”

 ***Jesus our Brother and Lord says: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”***

 ***“This I command you: Love one another.”***

Wonderfully happy are those who hear the word of Christ and do it.

 ***Amen! Let love be in the work of our hands, the words of our mouths, and in the heart of all our prayers.***

The grace of the transfigured and transfiguring Christ,

the love of the transfiguring God,

and the friendship of the transfiguring Spirit,

be with us all.

  ***Amen!***

\*Note: all prayers and litanies above, are courtesy ©B D Prewer. It was Bruce’s intention that the prayers and litanies be adapted by each user to their own situation. This material can only be used for worship with acknowledgement and not otherwise reproduced without permission. Thank you to the estate of Bruce Prewer for allow us to publish his material here. Contact <http://www.bruceprewer.com> for details.

**A shorter prayer service**

*(may include some of the above material in the following format. Hymns may be included if desired and music is available)*

Greet each other

Prayer (may include invocation, adoration, confession and recognition of grace)

Reading: Psalm 99

Gospel reading: Matthew 17:1 – 9

Sharing and discussion of the readings

Sharing of concerns

Prayers for others (see above, may involve one or several people praying; may involve the use of symbolic actions as part of the prayers)

(Conclude with the Lord’s Prayer)

Blessing

***Howard Wallace suggests for using the Psalm in worship*** *(see****:*** [*http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/*](http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/)*):*

Parts of **Psalm 2** could be adapted in the **prayers of the people** particularly in light of recent protests against dictatorial leaders in the Middle East and northern Africa. *(This comment was made some years ago but there are often contemporary examples of what Howard is noting in the Psalm.)*

L: Why do the nations conspire,
and their peoples plot in vain?
The leaders of the earth set themselves,
taking counsel together, against the Lord
and the people?
**R: Happy are they who take refuge in the Lord.**

**Psalm 99** offers many more opportunities for use in worship. Verses 1-2 could be used as a **call to worship** with the final part of the refrain the response of the people.

Alternatively the whole psalm could be used with refrains as a combination of **prayer of adoration and confession**:

The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.
**Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he!**
Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity;
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
**Extol the LORD our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he!**
Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those who called on his name.
They cried to the LORD, and he answered them.
He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
they kept his decrees, and the statutes that he gave them.
O LORD our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them,
but an avenger of their wrongdoings.
**Extol the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain;**
**for the LORD our God is holy.**

Howard often uses the NRSV but other versions can be used such as Nathan Nettleton’s paraphrase (found at <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>), The Message, Bruce Prewer’s adaptations (both paraphrases) or the New Living Translation. The Message and New Living Translation are accessible via [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

**For sermon and/or reflection preparation**

Pilgrim Theological College has launched a new web site with podcasts starting with reflections on Advent and preaching in the Year of Matthew. The podcasts continue for Epiphany and are planned to be published into the coming year. Go to <http://bythewell.com.au/>. There is a new one each week and are produced about 2 weeks before the particular Sunday being addressed. These are a great resources, are easy to understand and access. You could easily play them in your service and then invite discussion afterwards. Be aware though that each one goes for over 20 minutes and are geared for those preparing to preach or lead a reflection. Each discussion (podcast) explores many ideas and issues in the passage examined so you may want to pick one of these to develop.

Other good sermon resources and even full sermons are found at <http://benedictus.com.au> and <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>. The Benedictus site is from the Benedictus Church in Canberra, an ecumenical community that uses meditative and contemplative practices as part of their worship and life. Their “reflections” page has sermons in text format and more recent sermons in downloadable mp3 format. The latter could be listened to by the congregation and then discussed or just use it as a full sermon. The *Laughingbird* site is administered by Nathan Nettleton, from the South Yarra Baptist Church and has sermons in text form collected over many years. Most are by Nathan but many are also by many excellent Biblical scholars.

**Songs which may bring deeper reflection are** – lots to consider:

TIS 220/AHB 153 This, this is the God we adore

TIS 446/AHB 374 Glorious things of you are spoken

TIS 569/AHB 478 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

TIS 238/AHB 179 Christ is the world's true light

TIS 453/AHB 235 We limit not the truth of God

TIS 675 Shine Jesus Shine

ATO 313/AOV[2] 3 Christ be our light *(a well-known song from the All Together series of music)*

AOVK 50/ATW 430 A voice is heard *(this is a great song also from the All Together series of music)*

TIS 718 Glory

David MacGregor has a range of contemporary songs. You may like to select one to learn. He often provides a downloadable mp3 file, music and lyrics for songs that are his own. His site is at: <https://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>

**Other Creative suggestions:**

* Visuals are very appropriate for most services. Art works can be used to draw people into the stories. <http://www.textweek.com/yeara/transfiga.htm> has links to artworks and movie suggestions related to the themes arising from the Bible readings. Some of these are by some of the greats and others by world class contemporary artists. This web site is highly recommended for wider worship resources but is going through a time of transition at the moment.
* Ann suggests a film clip from **The Work of Musalaha.** The Musalaha (Reconciliation) ia an organisation in the Holy Land which brings together Christians, Jews and Muslims, Palestinians and Israelis.  They cut through the fear and disconnection and distraction of all that is going on in this divided Land and they talk and act out hope and love and dreams.  Their actions transfigure their world. Visit their site here at <https://musalaha.org/> and watch some of their excellent videos.
* Ann suggests 2 listening songs. The first is “**Shine**” by the Newsboys from their album *Going Public*. The song uses words from the Gospel reading. The second is “**Jubilate**” by Robert Prizeman from his album *Libera*. Ann used this one with the Adult response below.
* Ann suggests as an adult response: *Give everyone a pencil and a card with a mountain pictured on it.
Suggest: Let's think of ways we can "climb the mountain" and put ourselves in places where God can reveal His presence to us. Have a minute or so in silence. Play a piece of thinking music - Jubilate (above) works really well. Use the card to write a prayer, draw a picture, compose a poem or put down a resolution.* Ann is not sure where she got this idea from.
* Ann also suggests as a discussion idea but it could be useful as part of a general reflection and sharing is to encourage people to share a time when they experienced the presence of God.
* Jeff Shrowder suggests where you are using **Matthew 17:1-9:**
*Using a felt-tipped pen and a length of newsprint (e.g. 1.5 metres) create a banner bearing the words, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"
At the bottom left add small a sketch of two tablets of stone (Moses - Torah). At the bottom right sketch some locusts and honeycomb (Elijah - prophets)"*
* Seasons of the Spirit is a resource package available through Media Com. They have weekly resources available that can be purchased. They have great resources for all ages, creative ideas and thoughtful suggestions for reflection and sermon development. If you want to check it out, speak to Rev Peter or contact our Romsey congregation who use the material often*.*

**Other resources**

* See the Resources page of our web site, <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/resources-and-event-diary> for an extensive list of links and other resources.
* Our Romsey congregation has access to Seasons of the Spirit materials. Contact Jay for details as to what is available.
* Bruce Prewer’s web site has sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.bruceprewer.com/>.
* Nathan Nettleton’s site has paraphrase versions of the readings, sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>.
* Ann Scull has some great suggestions for creative worship. Go to <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/>.
* Sacredise is a great web site that has a huge range of resources. Go to <http://sacredise.com/>.
* David McGregor has some great suggestions for contemporary music and songs. Go to <http://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>
* Geoff Shrowder has suggestions for the use of the Psalm, often a thoughtful piece and suggestions for hymns. Go to <http://thebillabong.info/>.